

Glenn H. Curtiss Mansion and Gardens



GLENN HAMMOND CURTISS MANSION AND GARDENS

500 Deer Run

National Register of Historic Places (2001)

Designated Miami Springs Historic Site (1987)

As the only existing structure directly connected to aviation pioneer and promoter, flying ace, prolific inventor, developer, “Father of Naval Aviation” and Distinguished Flying Cross recipient Glenn Hammond Curtiss, the Curtiss Mansion at 500 Deer Run was not only home to Curtiss and his family from its construction in 1925 to his death in 1930, but also the setting for a prodigious body of work and number of accomplishments and activities that the great man undertook while in residence.

Since 1998, the Pueblo Revival-style Mansion has been the property of the City of Miami Springs, and the not-for-profit all volunteer Curtiss Mansion, Inc. was formed to restore and operate this historic home. Now completed to its original 1925 condition after three arsons, this all-volunteer group raised more than \$4.5 million for this effort. You can learn more about Glenn Curtiss, the restoration, and the schedule of events that are taking place at <http://www.curtissmansion.org>.

The building is roughly V-shaped in plan and is constructed of hollow clay tile with a rough textured stucco exterior. Roofs are flat with very irregular parapet walls embellished by projecting water spouts (canales) and irregularly shaped openings. At the northwest corner of the building, the main entrance is set within a deeply recessed T-shaped opening, and is enhanced by a flat-roofed porte-cochere with a stylized bell cote motif and prominent water spouts in the irregular parapet walls. The first story of the southeast central courtyard features oolitic limestone accents pierced by windows and glass doors. Original fenestration wood casement has been duplicated exactly, except with impact-resistant glass. Significant interior features include an oolitic limestone fireplace, exposed ceiling beams, a circular stucco staircase and arched door and window openings.

The building is located on a beautifully landscaped triangular lot with a pair of Pueblo Revival gatehouses that are consistent with the design of the residence. A long winding driveway lined with tall stately royal palms leads from the gatehouses past the one-acre free form pond to the residence's main entrance. A rustic oolitic limestone seating area used by Mrs. Curtiss for tea parties with a barbecue pit, a koi pond, a waterfall, concrete benches and tables and the monumental arched concrete and oolitic limestone staircase that led to the original swimming pool (now demolished) are in the southeast corner behind the house.

The Curtiss Mansion was designed by well-known local architect, Martin Luther Hampton, one of Miami's most prominent architects during the 1920s. His designs include the former Miami Beach City Hall and Congress Building in downtown Miami. The lush tropical landscaping combined spacious lawns, a profusion of tropical shrubs, flowers and trees, clusters of bamboo and ponds. They were designed by Mr. Curtiss in consultation with his close friend and associate, noted botanist David Fairchild. The main pond includes two landscaped oolitic limestone islands that still provide a haven for tropical water fowl.

After the house was completed, Curtiss made two additional changes to accommodate his needs. First, the garage was extended four feet to allow for the extra length of his vehicles, which incorporated features he had designed himself and an element being retained in the renovation. Secondly, a private enclosed staircase was added so that he could access his second floor private office/workroom without using the main staircase, which was visible from the living room; a feature Curtiss had also added to the Hammondsport, NY home he inherited from his grandmother.

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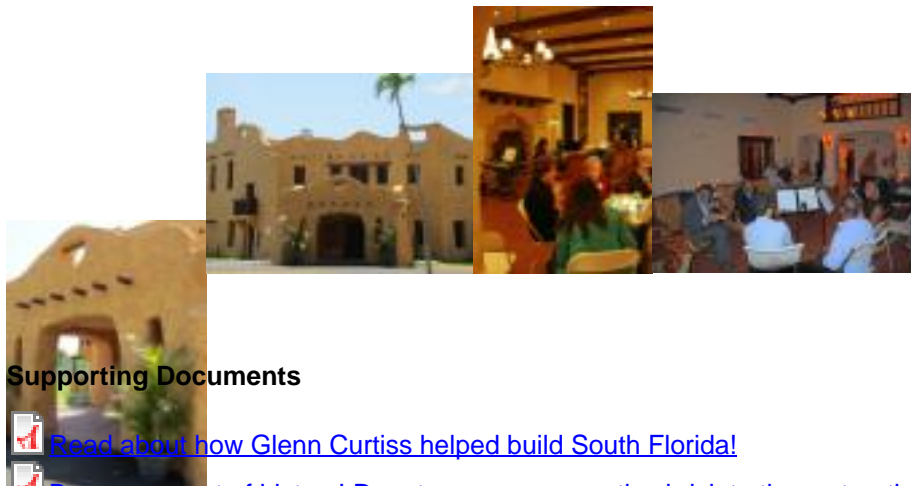
The Curtiss family move from the New York area to Florida was gradual, and took place over a number of years starting in 1917, during which Mr. Curtiss and family wintered in various Miami locations. His interest in flight schools and the growing aviation industry were sustained by the favorable Miami climate which enabled year-round activity, and he soon was lured by Mayor Sewall of Miami to become a permanent resident. Nowadays, many prominent people may move to Florida to retire, but for Curtiss, who was only in his forties, this was most definitely not the case! Never one to sit still for long, he became a major player in the Florida land development boom of the 1920s. Although his land development company, the Curtiss-Bright Corporation, had a formal office, he continued his personal passion for invention and work on many other transportation-related projects from his private office and workroom in the Mansion. In fact, he developed and applied for his final ten patents (of the several hundred he held) while living there. Mr. Curtiss' significant accomplishments, activities, associations and awards during his time in the Mansion provide incontrovertible evidence that he was not only an aviation pioneer and ace of world renown, but also one of America's truly remarkable unsung heroes and a seminal force in the development of South Florida.

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Supporting Documents



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